



Item Number: 13

**City Council / Board of Directors**

**Written Communication**

**Meeting of: April 15, 2025**

**Submitted By:**

Fredy Bonilla, City Engineer

**Subject:**

La Paz Drive/Seneca Road Traffic Circle Quick Build Project – Notice of Exemption and Intent to Accept Competitive Grant Award

**Recommendation:**

That the Honorable City Council;

- (1) Adopt Resolution 25-023 of the City of Victorville declaring intent to accept a SCAG Competitive Grant Award for the La Paz/Seneca Road Traffic Circle Quick Build Project, finding the Project exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, and authorizing the City Manager to execute all necessary documents to accept award; and
- (2) Approve the Notice of Exemption and authorize staff to file the notice with the Office of Planning and Research and the County Clerk.

**Fiscal Impact:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item. The action is solely to satisfy the pre-award requirements for the Southern California Association of Governments Sustainable Communities grant program. Additionally, the grant does not include a matching funding requirement.

**Strategic Plan Goal:**

This project aligns with Goal E “Invest in Infrastructure” in the City of Victorville Strategic Plan 2023-2026 by increasing vehicular and pedestrian safety with the installation of a traffic circle quick build project.

**Background:**

In July 2024, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) issued a call for applications for the 2024 Sustainable Communities Program (SCP) – Active Transportation and Safety. This program provides funding for projects that support active transportation modes (walking, biking, and transit), improve roadway safety, and achieve

the mobility goals, planning policies, strategic investments, and implementation strategies of the Connect SoCal 2024 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. Included in this call for projects were the following two project categories:

- (1) Community/Areawide Plans: Active transportation-related plans that benefit disadvantaged communities, per the state's Active Transportation Program guidelines.
- (2) Quick-Build Projects: Interim capital improvement projects that require minor construction activity and use durable, low- to medium-cost materials to pilot and iterate through active transportation and roadway safety project designs with community feedback.

Please see Attachment D Active Transportation and Safety Amended Program Guidelines.

In response to this call for projects, on Friday, September 27, 2024, the Engineering Department submitted a Quick-Build Project application titled "La Paz Drive & Seneca Road Traffic Circle". After the review and scoring of the applications in December of 2024, the SCAG council approved the 2024 SCP – Active Transportation and Safety Project List of projects wherein the City of Victorville's application was included. On January 25, 2025, SCAG notified the City of its intent to award \$503,700 for the "La Paz Drive / Seneca Road Traffic Circle Quick-Build Project" (herein referred to as "La Paz Drive Traffic Circle Quick-Build Project").

To further elaborate, Quick-Build Projects refer to a type of capital improvement that requires minimal or minor construction activities and immediately implements safety needs. Quick-Build Projects are also flexible in that treatments can be removed, altered, or modified based on community feedback and information collected. Some examples include bicycle lane striping, crosswalk additions or enhancements, wayfinding signs, or the addition of potted vegetation/shade trees on sidewalks.

The intersection of La Paz Drive, Mesa Drive, and Seneca Road is geometrically difficult for drivers to navigate. It is one of the signalized intersections within the City that continues to have collisions on a regular basis even with the traffic signal present. Over the years, City staff has implemented different traffic patterns to try to mitigate the crashes. Collision reports indicate one of the principle causes for crashes at the intersection were due to unsafe speeds followed by improper turns and DUIs. Five (5) out of the eight (8) collisions included in the SCP application resulted in property damage. One traffic pattern that has not been implemented at this intersection has been a traffic circle. It is anticipated a traffic circle at this location will act as a traffic calming measure, forcing drivers to slow down in order to enter and exit the circle. As a result, it is anticipated that changing the geometry of the intersection will reduce collisions and improve the safety of this intersection.

Due to the unusual geometry with the La Paz Drive, Mesa Drive, and Seneca Road intersection, it makes this location a great candidate for a community quick-build pilot

project. The project will allow the City to rapidly implement safety improvements using cost-effective and temporary materials that could be replaced with permanent infrastructure at a later time, allowing for fast intervention. The project will further include a community feedback component that will allow motorists to comment on the temporary improvement, therefore allowing the City to adjust the improvements, evaluate usage, and determine whether the traffic circle or the traffic signal will work best for all users. While the temporary traffic circle is implemented and being studied, the existing traffic signal may remain in place, but not be operational. The project will be primarily led by the City's Engineering Department staff and will pursue collaboration and feedback from local stakeholders throughout the project development and implementation phases.

**Discussion:**

As a condition of the grant award, the City must submit a resolution of the City Council supporting the project and demonstrating California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) clearance. Engineering staff has reviewed the proposed project and has identified that the project is exempt from CEQA, which is hereby noted in Resolution 25-023. Upon Council adoption, staff will file Resolution 25-023 and the Notice of Exemption with the San Bernardino County Registrar Recorder and the State's Clearinghouse and then proceed with submitting the executed Resolution and CEQA-related documentation to SCAG.

CEQA requires that public agencies review all projects to consider their potential direct or indirect environmental impacts and to establish whether such impacts can be reduced or avoided through mitigation or by pursuing other alternatives. The California Code of Regulations Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, provides guidelines for implementation of the CEQA. Article 19 of the guidelines identifies certain types of projects which have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment and which are exempt from the provisions of the CEQA.

City staff has evaluated the scope of this project and has determined this work is Categorical Exempt from CEQA under Article 19, Section 15301(c): Existing Facilities (Class 1) of the CEQA guidelines.

This determination was based on the following criteria:

- The installation of a traffic circle at the La Paz Dr/Seneca Rd intersection is a minor alteration that will involve no expansion of existing use/capacity as their scopes aim to improve the safety of the intersection by installing a traffic circle that will reduce vehicular speeds.
- None of the following exceptions considered under Section 15300.2 apply for the reasons stated below:
  - (a) Location: The proposed project elements will be installed within the existing City's Right-of-way within no particularly sensitive environments.

- (b) Cumulative Impact: The traffic circle will be fully functional upon completion and will not require any successive projects for which cumulative impacts must be considered.
- (c) Significant Effect: Even under unusual circumstances there is no reasonable possibility that the activities to be performed to complete this project will have a significant effect on the environment.
- (d) Scenic Highways: The project is not located within a scenic highway.
- (e) Hazardous Waste Sites: The project is not listed on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
- (f) Historical Resources: The project will not affect any historical resources as they will be installed within existing streets.

Pursuant to Article 5, Section 15061, after determining that a project is exempt from the CEQA, and once the project is approved by its governing body, a Notice of Exemption may be recorded to initiate a 35-day statute of limitations for any appeals submitted from a party feeling a categorical exemption is being improperly used to limit the possibility of legal challenge. Please refer to Attachment C, the Notice of Exemption for the project.

Upon approval of the recommendations of this agenda item, staff will begin work on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SCAG, which will memorialize the roles and responsibilities of each party. It is anticipated that the MOU execution will occur sometime in the Summer of 2025. At that time, staff will return the item to the City Council to request approval for the formal acceptance of grant funds and project account creation. Following the formal grant acceptance, staff will proceed with implementation of the project by conducting pre-implementation/scope of work refinement discussions with the granting agency and public engagement.

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt Resolution No. 25-023 declaring the intention of accepting a SCAG Competitive Grant Award and approve the Notice of Exemption for the La Paz Drive & Seneca Road Traffic Circle project.

Staff is available for any questions Council may have.

- Attachments:**
- A. Resolution 25-023
  - B. Vicinity Map
  - C. Notice of Exemption
  - D. Active Transportation and Safety Amended Program Guidelines